



ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ ПРОБЛЕМЫ

Членство Республики Хорватия в НАТО

Марта Зубович

*Дипломатическая академия МИД РФ, Москва Россия,
zubovicmarta@gmail.com*

Аннотация: В статье речь идет о развитии евроатлантического вектора хорватской внешней политики, прежде всего об историческом пути государства в НАТО и преимуществах членства в альянсе. Республика Хорватия в своей истории пережила достаточно сложный период, связанный с войной 1991-1995 гг., после объявления о выходе из СФРЮ. С тех пор одной из главных целей хорватской внешней политики являлось вступление в евроатлантическую структуру. Эта цель была достигнута государством в 2009 г., когда Хорватия стала полноправным членом НАТО. Опираясь на опыт недавней войны, для Республики Хорватия это членство является фактором обеспечения безопасности страны. Оно также сможет способствовать улучшению межгосударственных отношений на Балканах и укреплению стабильности в регионе в целом. В работе также будут освещены операции и миссии, в которых Хорватия участвует в рамках НАТО и вносит вклад в успешное осуществление евроатлантической внешней политики

Ключевые слова: Республика Хорватия, НАТО, внешняя политика, евроатлантические структуры, Западные Балканы

Для цитирования: Зубович М. Членство Республики Хорватия в НАТО объединений с участием России. *Проблемы постсоветского пространства*. 2019;6(4):390-397. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24975/2313-8920-2019-6-4-390-397>

Статья поступила 29.06.2019

Принята в печать 11.08.2019

Опубликована 02.12.2019

Republic of Croatia's Membership in NATO

Marta Zubovic

*Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Russian Federation, Moscow, Russia
zubovicmarta@gmail.com*

Abstract: The article discusses the Euro-Atlantic vector of Croatian foreign policy, primarily the historical path of the state into NATO and the advantages of membership in this alliance.

The Republic of Croatia in its history experienced a rather difficult period associated with the Croatian War for Independence, which began in 1991 after the state announced its withdrawal from the SFRY. Since then, one of the main goals of Croatian foreign policy has been joining the Euro-Atlantic structures, which was fulfilled in 2009, when Croatia became a full member of NATO. Based on the experience of the War for Independence, for the Republic of Croatia this membership is an important factor in ensuring the country's security, and it can also help improve interstate relations in the Balkans and strengthen stability in the region. The work will also outline the operations and missions in which Croatia participates within the NATO framework and contributes to the successful implementation of Euro-Atlantic foreign policy.

Keywords: Republic of Croatia, NATO, foreign policy, Euro-Atlantic structures, Western Balkans

For citation: Zubovic M. Republic of Croatia's Membership in NATO. *Post-Soviet Issues*. 2019;6(4):390-397. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24975/2313-8920-2019-6-4-390-397>

Received 29.06.2019

Revised 11.08.2019

Published 02.12.2019

INTRODUCTION

Modern society is characterized and heavily influenced by globalization, a process which enables faster and easier communication and inter-connectivity between the countries of the world. However, aside from its many advantages, globalization and modernization have also brought new, different kinds of threats, such as terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, cyber attacks etc. Having already been through World War II, the society was urged to establish an organization whose main task would be the ensurance and provision of security and stability to its members. With that in mind, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was formed.

Republic of Croatia, a relatively young country in the Western Balkans, proclaimed its independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, and ever since that moment, its foreign policy was mostly directed at strenghtening ties with the West and European structures. It does not come as a surprise that one of Croatia's goals in this respect was the accession to NATO, due to the fact that the membership in such an organization provides a guarantee

of the country's military and, to some extent, political security.

The article will cover Croatia's path to NATO and various tasks and reforms that had to be completed prior to the country's accession to the alliance. The second part of the article will cover NATO lead operations and missions in which Croatia has participated, or is still participating in. All the main points and observations will be carried out in the conclusion.

CROATIA'S ROAD TO NATO

After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, a full-time membership in the Euro-Atlantic integrations has been the primary goal of Croatian foreign policy. However, this path has been significantly slowed down by the Croatian war for Independence and fighting off Serbian aggression, the consequences of which have increased the number of reforms the Croatian leadership had to undertake in order to come closer to the qualities and common principles of the West, including the NATO alliance [1]. They were mostly related to the development

of a stable and permanent democracy, the rule of law, human rights and freedom of speech, market economy, prosperous international relations and solidarity [1].

The first step in the institutionalization of Croatian-NATO relations was achieved in 2000, when Croatia entered the so-called Partnership for Peace programme (PfP) [2]. The programme was established in 1994 and it represents a framework for co-operation between the NATO member countries and partner-countries outside the alliance in various fields, such as military exercises, conducting missions under the NATO leadership, restructuring the security systems of partner countries etc [3]. It aimed to broaden and intensify the political and military cooperation all over Europe, diminish global threats and build stable relations among European countries. However, even though there was no particular list of terms under which a certain country could apply for the program, it presupposed that the candidate country had a system of security and defense planning, transparently published in public strategic documents, such as the National Security Strategy, Defense Strategy, Military Strategy, etc. As far as defense is concerned, it had to be transparently financed from the state budget, with a systematically established democratic supervision of the military forces. It was requested that the military forces were trained and prepared for the missions under the UN and OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) leadership, as well as that they took part in crisis management operations outside the NATO member countries territories [1]. The membership in the PfP plays an important role in the process of accession of new member-countries into NATO and Croatia has marked it as one of the main elements of the country's national security. For Croatia, the program was perceived as a mechanism that

opens a broad area of co-operation with the NATO member countries [4].

After the end of the Croatian War for Independence, the country's leadership officially proclaimed the full-time NATO and the EU membership as the main goals and priorities of Croatian foreign policy. In 1996, Croatian government officially applied for the PfP programme, but the response from NATO made it clear that Croatia at the time still did not fulfil all the necessary terms and had to solve a number of post-war issues. These issues were mostly concerned with the underdeveloped democracy, inadequate relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina, human rights, as well as the fact that certain parts of the Croatian territory were still under Serbian occupation. In 1998, after a successful, peaceful reintegration of the eastern parts of Croatia, the conditions for intensifying the negotiation process into Euro-Atlantic structures were met [1].

In 2000, Republic of Croatia re-applied for the PfP. NATO responded by emphasizing the need to work more intensively on the country's foreign policy and questions related to the return of Serbian refugees, as well as closer co-operation with the The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). All the positive political processes that took place in Croatia after that, as well as the country's readiness to transform its foreign policy, accelerated the NATO's decision to invite Croatia into PfP. Accordingly, on 25 May 2000 Croatia became a member of the PfP and Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) alike [1]. This was the first major step on the country's way to NATO that enabled it to promote and develop national security and foreign policy, as well as to contribute to international and regional stability [1].

With the first stage in the Croatia's accession to NATO being completed, it was time for the government to turn its attention to the second stage, the one related to the Membership Ac-

tion Plan (MAP) [1]. The plan consists of comprehensive advisory measures, the purpose of which is to enable the candidate country to meet the objectives and priorities required for membership as effectively as possible. The successful implementation of the MAP ensures a coordinated approach of all relevant departments of the state administration in order to meet those goals. One of the main features of the MAP is the freedom to choose to focus on the goals which are the most relevant for the country at that particular moment. Each participating country is expected to create its own Annual National Program (ANP). The ANP should include preparatory measures for possible membership in five areas: 1) defense and military issues; 2) resource issues, i.e. ensuring adequate means of defense to meet membership obligations; 3) security issues; and 4) legal aspects of adapting domestic legislation to membership. The plan is therefore a comprehensive program of adapting the country's policies to possible membership in the alliance in political and economic terms, and is not a guarantee but a prerequisite for membership. The final decision depends primarily on political evaluation, for which the technical aspects of meeting the above criteria are only one of the elements [5].

Croatia handed in its first ANP for the period 2002/2003, in which it has confirmed its commitment to the value system of NATO countries, and once again emphasized the membership in the alliance as one of the highest priorities of its foreign policy [1]. Over the year 2002, Croatia has actively participated in a number of events and programs as a part of PfP (seminars, military exercises, conferences, etc.), and cooperated in the area of civil emergency planning [6]. The first Croatian ANP faced some criticism from NATO, mostly regarding the border question with Slovenia (the Bay of Piran), but a number of other reforms was met with praise, such as the issue of mi-

norities in Croatia, that was to be regulated by implementing the Law on the Rights of National Minorities. The need for closer cooperation with ICTY was emphasized [1].

In 2003, Croatia submitted its second ANP for the 2003/2004 period, which put more emphasis on the regional cooperation and the development of prosperous relations with the neighboring countries. The response from NATO was once again positive, however, the border issue with Slovenia remained as one of the main areas that demanded more attention from the Croatian government. Moreover, the question of cooperation was ICTY faced further complications, considering the fact that lieutenant general Ante Gotovina, the main Croatian defendant for war crimes, fled the country. This issue of Croatian foreign policy would soon become a top priority, as well as the biggest stumbling stone in not only Croatia-NATO relations, but also Croatia-EU relations. Until Gotovina's capture in 2005, the question of his whereabouts and the efforts Croatia was putting into solving the problem were the biggest obstacles for the progress of the country's foreign policy and were met with criticism from the European side [1]. As far as the reforms related to the armed forces are concerned, for the 2003/2004 period they were mostly criticized for still not being organized and developed enough to take part in combined war operations. The need for better mobility of the armed forces and their readiness to join the NATO operations was also underlined [1]. In 2003, Croatian armed forces started their contribution to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan [7].

The third ANP, 2004/2005, explicitly emphasized that the Republic of Croatia has made the accession to NATO and the EU its top priorities and the most important strategic plans. Moreover, aside from the military forces, Croatian leadership had made the decision

to include civil police, as well as diplomats, in the ISAF operation in Afghanistan. The country's readiness to contribute to any other operation lead by NATO, either on its own or in cooperation with other countries, was emphasized. Croatia contributed to the improvement of the situation in the region by actively participating in the NATO program for Serbia and Montenegro, which included activities such as language learning and courses for the UN military observes, simultaneously intensifying the relations between the countries' Ministries of Defense [1].

Croatia's final, fourth ANP for 2005/2006 stated that the country intends to intensify its participation in the ISAF by tripling its contingent and by taking part in other operations. As far as regional questions go, Croatia emphasized its readiness to contribute to the increase of regional security by tightening border control, in order to successfully fight terrorism, human and drug trafficking, etc. In this ANP, Croatia accentuated its efforts in cooperation with ICTY on the single unresolved issue, the one regarding Ante Gotovina. These efforts proved to be efficient only two months after submitting the ANP, when Gotovina was caught outside Croatian territory, in the Canary Islands. The document also included the overview of a number of other reforms Croatia has undertaken in the area of democracy and defense system [1].

In 2006, at a NATO summit in Riga, the alliance has expressed its readiness to invite the candidate countries to the next summit in Bucharest, in 2008. In this way, for the first time, Croatia has gotten a clear timeframe for membership [6].

Croatia indeed received its official invitation to NATO at the aforementioned summit. The improvements in modernization and governance of the military system were praised, however, a relative lack of the public support to the NATO membership was brought forward as a

troubling factor. However, over time, Croatian public's negative opinion about NATO has improved and soon after the Bucharest summit, about 60% of the population supported the country's aspirations for membership [8]. This was followed by the ratification of the Croatian Accession Protocol in the national parliaments of the member countries, as well as the deposit of all national ratification instruments in the depositary of the NATO, i.e. the US State Secretary. On the 1st of April 2009, Croatia deposited its ratification document and became a member of the NATO. The country participated as a full member of the alliance at the NATO summit in Strasbourg and Kehl, held on April 3 and 4, 2009 [2].

CROATIA'S ACTIVITY WITHIN THE EURO-ATLANTIC FRAMEWORK

By becoming a full-time NATO member Croatia has joined all the military, political and other activities of the alliance. Croatian representatives as of then are regularly taking part in the activities of all NATO bodies and committees, what enables further progress of Croatian policy regarding a range of issues discussed within the Euro-Atlantic organisation [10].

Croatia's activities within the Alliance can be divided into several key areas, the first of them being security cooperation [7]. It presupposes taking part in NATO-lead military operations, and by doing that, Republic of Croatia fulfills its international duties in the stabilization of critical areas, develops the abilities of its armed forces and their interoperability, as well as shares its previously acquired knowledge. Croatia has been participating in NATO Peace Support Operations in Afghanistan (Resolute Support Mission — RSM) as of January 2015 (a follow-up to the previously completed ISAF, in which Croatia has also taken part [11])) as well as in Kosovo (Kosovo Force — KFOR) since June 2009 [6].

On January 1, 2015, NATO started its Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, the aim of which is the continuation of consultation and training to the Afghan security forces. It is conducted by approx. 12 000 people from NATO member countries and partner states [12]. In February 2019, there were 106 Croatian troops taking part in the mission, [11] and as of September 2019, that number increased to 110, with the 11th Croatian contingent having departed to Afghanistan. [13].

NATO operation in Kosovo, KFOR, has been active since 12 June 1999, and its main goal is provision and maintenance of a „safe and secure environment, freedom of movement for all citizens in Kosovo and to facilitate the Euro-Atlantic integration of the Western Balkans“ [14]. The first Croatian contingent was sent to Kosovo on July 1, 2009, consisting of 20 members of Croatian armed forces and two transport helicopters Mi-17 Sh [12]. According to the data from May 2019, the total number of Croatian troops in Kosovo at the moment is 34 [15]. The main tasks of the Croatian contingent in Kosovo include transportation of armed forces, cargo and VIP persons, under the direct command of the Operation Commander [11]. Moreover, Croatia has been providing logistical support to operations in the area lead by NATO, by enabling not only the use of the sea and several airports, but also different military facilities, overflight rights and the use of the national air traffic control service [7].

Another area in which Croatia can contribute is the support to Southeastern Europe. Strengthening of cooperation between neighbouring countries and NATO is important to Croatia for three reasons: 1) strengthening of political relations between the countries of the region and NATO includes conducting reforms directly connected to democratization and transparency of the armed military forces system; 2) strengthening the cooperation of

the countries in the region with the Alliance is politically connected to a wider range of reforms, related to minorities, human rights, judiciary, etc., which is simultaneously linked to the criteria for EU membership; 3) engaging in regional cooperation reduces the risk of tensions in the region [12].

Republic of Croatia is actively participating in the VSUN 1325 „Women, peace and security“ resolution, in which NATO — as one of the key international peace- and security-keeping organisations — pays great attention to the role of women in peace missions and operations. Croatia has always emphasized the position of women in countries in transition as one of the priorities of its foreign policy. By taking part in peace operations within the NATO, Croatia has been putting great emphasis of the importance of women’s participation in them [12].

CONCLUSION

Republic of Croatia, a country which was struck by war and fight for independence during the 90s, had set accession to European and Euro-Atlantic integrations as the main goals of its foreign policy and its government has directed all of the efforts into achieving these goals. Having experienced war terrors firsthand, a NATO membership was perceived as a security guarantee and a matter of national interest for Croatia. However, the road into the alliance was long and filled with various demands that required undertaking a number of reforms related to democracy, military, human rights, etc.

In the end, Croatia has fulfilled all of the tasks that were set before it and eventually became a full-time NATO member. Ever since, its activity in the alliance has showed that despite being a small country with a relatively limited military potential, it can contribute to different NATO missions and operations, especially those related to the area of Western Balkans. The region in question is still characterized by

instabilities in relation to the aforementioned war, and Croatia, now a full-time member of both NATO and the European Union, can work as a mediator between the countries aspiring to reach the same foreign policy goals.

Aside from that, its membership in an alliance such as NATO contributes to the increase of military stability in the region and provides an opportunity for a more successful dialogue between the Balkan countries

REFERENCES

1. Čehulić R., Lovrić D., Vukadinović L. NATO u međunarodnim odnosima. Zagreb: Fakultet političkih znanosti; 2006. (In Cro.)
2. Ministarstvo vanjskih i europskih poslova Republike Hrvatske. Republika Hrvatska i NATO. URL: <http://www.mvep.hr/hr/vanjska-politika/multilateralni-odnosi0/multi-org-inicijative/nato/hrvatska-i-nato/> [Accessed: 14.8.2019] (In Cro.)
3. Barić R. Transformacija NATO-a i hrvatska obrambena reforma. *Polemos* 7. 2004;1-2:45-89 (In Cro.)
4. Božinović D., Čehulić V.L., Vukadinović R. NATO Euroatlantska integracija. Zagreb: Topical; 2007. (In Cro.)
5. Ministarstvo vanjskih i europskih poslova Republike Hrvatske. Multilateralni odnosi. URL: [http://www.mvep.hr/hr/vanjska-politika/multilateralni-odnosi-staro-ijvhj/organizacija-sjevernoatlantskog-saveza-\(nato\)/proces-prosirenja/](http://www.mvep.hr/hr/vanjska-politika/multilateralni-odnosi-staro-ijvhj/organizacija-sjevernoatlantskog-saveza-(nato)/proces-prosirenja/) [Accessed: 14.08.2019] (In Cro.)
6. Ministarstvo obrane Republike Hrvatske. Kronologija ključnih aktivnosti. URL: <https://www.morh.hr/kronologija-kljucnih-aktivnosti/> [Accessed: 18.08.2019] (In Cro.)
7. North Atlantic Treaty Organization. NATO's relations with Croatia. URL: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_31803.htm [Accessed: 16.08.2019]
8. Gallis P. The NATO Summit at Bucharest, 2008. CRS Report for Congress. URL: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS22847.pdf> [Accessed: 17.08.2019]
9. Ministarstvo vanjskih i europskih poslova Republike Hrvatske. Prioriteti i aktivnosti RH kao članice NATO-a. URL: <http://www.mvep.hr/hr/vanjska-politika/multilateralni-odnosi0/multi-org-inicijative/nato/hrvatska-i-nato/prioriteti-i-aktivnosti/> [Accessed: 18.08.2019] (In Cro.)
10. Ministarstvo vanjskih poslova i europskih integracija Republike Hrvatske. Prva godina članstva u NATO-u. URL: <http://www.mvep.hr/custompages/static/hrv/files/godisnjak2009/hr/pog01.html> [Accessed: 18.08.2019] (In Cro.)
11. North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Resolute Support Mission (RSM): Key Facts and Figures. URL: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2018_09/20180903_2018-09-RSM-Placemat.pdf [Accessed: 18.08.2019]
12. North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Kosovo Force (KFOR): Key Facts and Figures. URL: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_05/20190527_2019-05-kfor-placemat.pdf [Accessed: 18.08.2019]
13. Jutarnji L. U Afganistan otišli prvi hrvatski vojnici nakon smrti skupnika Briškog. Krstičević: 'Vlada prati situaciju, spremni smo donositi pravovremene odluke' URL: <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/u-afganistan-otisli-prvi-hrvatski-vojnici-nakon-smrti-skupnika-briskog-krsticevic-vlada-prati-situaciju-spremni-smo-donositi-pravovremene-odluke/9318440/> [Accessed: 10.09.2019] (In Cro.)
14. Ministarstvo vanjskih i europskih poslova Republike Hrvatske. Hrvatska u mirovnim misijama i operacijama NATO-a. URL: <http://www.mvep.hr/hr/vanjska-politika/multilateralni-odnosi0/medunarodna-sigurnost/mirovne-misije/hrvatska-u-mirovnim-misijama-i-operacijama/>

hrvatska-u-mirovnim-misijama-i-operacija-ma-nato-a/ [Accessed: 18.08.2019] (In Cro.)

nato.int/ongoingoperations/nato-mission-in-kosovo-kfor- [Accessed: 18.08.2019]

15. North Atlantic Treaty Organization. NATO Mission in Kosovo (KFOR). URL: <https://shape.>

ИНФОРМАЦИЯ ОБ АВТОРЕ / INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Марта Зубович, Дипломатическая академия МИД России, Москва, Россия; 119021, Россия, Москва, ул. Остоженка, д. 53/2, стр. 1;

zubovicmarta@gmail.com

Marta Zubovic, Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Moscow, Russia; bld. 53/2, b. 1, Ostozhenka str. Moscow, 119021, Russia;

zubovicmarta@gmail.com